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mit, and in doing so they have done much towards the clarification of the important philosophic issues of the day.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Le Thomisme, introduction au système de S. Thomas D'Aquin.*

ÉTIENNE GILSON. Strasbourg: A. Vix et Cie. 1919. Pp. 174.

It has become conventional among historians of philosophy to pass from the Greeks to the moderns, from Plotinus to Bacon and Descartes, much as if between there had been no speculating on earth "about it, and about." This attitude of mind is grossly provincial. It appears to be taken for granted that the great schoolmen of the thirteenth century, because they were theologians, could not be philosophers; whereas, remarks Professor Gilson, "une philosophie qui cherche à rejoindre une foi n'en est pas moins une philosophie" (p. 6). Indeed, to him the thirteenth century appears as rich a philosophical epoch as the epochs of Descartes and of Leibnitz, or of Kant and of Auguste Comte. As chief representatives of that rich period he cites Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus. It is to the *philosophical* system of the former that he will introduce his reader.

This system, like all great systems of philosophy, resulted from an effort to harmonize divergent spiritual tendencies of the historical moment. In a few broad outlines, Professor Gilson sketches the antecedents of the situation.

After Plotinus, there was for five centuries virtual philosophical silence. The two centuries of the Patristic period were altogether theological; the three centuries following were wholly given to practical issues, political and social reconstruction. Under Charlemagne this task was fulfilled. Under his aegis, also, revived philosophical speculation, thereafter to continue to modern times without breach of continuity. During the next four centuries, three considerable conclusions were arrived at, all three fundamental to the Thomistic synthesis: (1) recognition of the parallel validity of reason and faith; (2) solution of the age-long problem of "universals" by *conceptualism* demonstrating the sense-origin of concepts; (3) the so-called scholastic method of argumentation by enumeration of arguments *contra*, development of the solution proposed, refutation of objections already raised.

Opinion in this period, on the other hand, wavered uncertainly between Plato and Aristotle without clearly understanding either. Of Aristotle, especially, only the *Organon* was directly accessible. What

therefore wholly altered the situation were the Toledan translations of the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, Avicenna's abridgment, and Averroës' commentary, all divulged at the beginning of the thirteenth century. But the Peripatetic system, now at last revealed in its wholeness, seemed to deny Christian faith in divine providence and the immortality of the individual human soul.

In consequence, Christian opinion again split. One faction, voiced principally by the Franciscan St. Bonaventure, asserted fundamental antagonism between the new Aristotle and Christian dogma. Aristotle's basic error lay for them in his rejection of Plato's doctrine of Ideas. If God possessed not in himself the Ideas of all things as exemplars, he must know himself only, and not particulars; which negates divine providence. Moreover, oblivious of his world, God could not have created it. Therefore it must be eternal. If eternal, there must have existed in it an infinity of men, and so there must be an infinity of souls; unless indeed the soul is corruptible, or the same souls pass from body to body, or there is but one soul—or intellect—for all men. According to Averroës, Aristotle accepted the last choice. Hence, obviously, Aristotle would deny the possibility of individual immortality and of future reward and punishment. St. Bonaventure and his group, accordingly, rejected Aristotle and all his works, and clung to the traditional Platonic-Augustinian exemplarism.

Another faction, in despair, renounced speculation by reason altogether, so setting up again the barrier between reason and faith. At the other extreme, a not inconsiderable group of intellectual radicals, defying imputation of heresy, accepted the Averroistic Aristotle *in toto*.

Against the anathema of the Church, these radicals could not prevail; but the very boldness of their stand in the name of reason was a warning. The manifest superiority of Aristotle's natural science assured its ultimate acceptance. If his metaphysics could be conformed to Christian dogma, that dogma would be the more strengthened by sponsoring his triumphant—and innocuous—physical doctrines. Otherwise, there was danger of heresy spreading.

Specifically, to Christianize Aristotle it was necessary, says Professor Gilson, to "réintroduire dans le système l'exemplarisme et la création, maintenir la providence, concilier l'unité de la forme substantielle avec l'immortalité de l'âme" (p. 12). The path-breaker towards this end was Albert of Cologne, called "the Great;" but although encyclopedic in scope, he failed to achieve in any proper sense a coherent and consistent philosophical system on the compromise bases. This achievement was reserved for

his disciple, Thomas Aquinas; and as evidence of St. Thomas's success, Professor Gilson alleges the fact that "après six cent ans de spéculation philosophique et malgré des tentatives innombrables pour constituer une apologétique sur des bases nouvelles, l'Eglise vit encore de la pensée de S. Thomas d'Aquin, et veut continuer d'en vivre" (pp. 13-14).

The method of St. Thomas's conciliation may be illustrated by a single instance. According to Aristotle, a future contingent can not be known, for as soon as known as true, it ceases to be contingent to become necessary. But to refuse God the knowledge of future contingents, is to make providence impossible. Aristotle's conclusion on this point is therefore inadmissible. Although disparity with dogmatic truth, however, motivates rejection of Aristotle's authority, rejection is not justified until reason can find support for the opposite conclusion. St. Thomas, accordingly, demonstrates by logical deduction that God can, and must, know future contingents (pp. 67-68).

The instance is typical; and from it the generalization may be made that St. Thomas incorporated into his system Aristotle's positions so far as these were compatible with Christian dogma; and if substitutions were made in the name of the Faith, these also were logically deduced from the premises of the system itself. So, to repeat, although St. Thomas be motivated by theological considerations, he still achieved in the strictest sense of the word a *philosophy*.

To evaluate in detail the outline of this philosophy given by Professor Gilson is beyond the competence of the present reviewer. It is at least delightfully candid, succinct, and clear.

There is, however, a point of query. Emphasizing as basic to Thomism, the restriction of human cognition to abstraction from the data of sense, Professor Gilson declares in his general conclusion: "Le platonisme trouvait dans la mystique son dernier achèvement, et il faut dire, au contraire, que dans la mesure où la mystique supposerait une intuition, et comme une expérience directe de Dieu par l'âme, le thomisme constitue la négation radicale de la mystique" (pp. 171-172). Perhaps in consistency this should be true; but St. Thomas was confronted with the case of St. Paul (II *Cor.* xii), and unqualifiedly concludes that the Apostle had in "rapture" immediate cognition of the divine essence. (Cf. *De veritate*, xii, 2; *Summa theol.* II-II, clxxiv, 4.) Now obviously, to admit the possibility of even a single "expérience directe de Dieu par l'âme" is to open the door to mysticism. Instance the Thomist Dante's claim to a similar intuition, which may be poetic fiction, but is no less recognition of the mystical potentiality of St. Thomas's doctrine.

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